



NATIONAL

FAREWELL, TRAGICALLY HIP

— AND THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC



If there was ever any doubt that music can unite a country, that doubt was shattered this past summer. That was when Canadians of all backgrounds and ages came together to celebrate what was likely the last cross-country tour of The Tragically Hip.

The Hip, as fans call the group, is arguably the nation's most beloved rock band. The musicians – lead singer Gord Downie, guitarist Paul Langlois, guitarist Rob Baker, bassist Gord Sinclair and drummer Johnny Fay – have produced 14 albums in 32 years. They've sold millions of records. Many of their hits, such as *The Lonely End of the Rink*, tell truly Canadian stories. The band is inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame.

"If you're a musician and you're born in Canada it's in your

DNA to like the Tragically Hip," said Canadian musician Dallas Green.

A SAD ANNOUNCEMENT

The reason the Hip probably won't be on the road again is a sad one. In May, the musicians announced that Mr. Downie, who writes the band's lyrics, has **terminal** brain cancer. The band promised fans one last tour in support of their latest album, *Man Machine Poem*.

"This feels like the right thing to do now, for Gord, and for all of us," they declared.

Their faithful following agreed. Every single concert ticket in Canada was gone within minutes of going on sale.

EMOTIONS RUN HIGH

The final concert on August 20 in the band's hometown of Kingston, Ontario, was a highly

emotional experience. About 11.7 million people tuned in when the CBC streamed it live. Hundreds of viewing parties were held across Canada, and Kingston officially proclaimed the date *The Tragically Hip Day*.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was among the thousands of eager fans in the arena.

"[Mr. Downie's] status as an extraordinary Canadian creative force and **icon** is not to be understated," he said. "He is a true original who has been writing Canada's soundtrack for more than 30 years."

MR. DOWNIE THE ACTIVIST

Mr. Downie is a committed environmentalist and a strong **proponent** of clean water rights. He even helped stop a cement

DEFINITIONS

DNA: the main chemical component of chromosomes and the material of which genes are made

ICON: a person or thing seen as a representative symbol

PROONENT: a person who pleads for a cause

TERMINAL: (of a disease) incurable



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company from burning tires for fuel near the village of Bath.

The Hip are also long-standing friends of First Nations. At the final concert Mr. Downie said that we have been trained to ignore aboriginal issues. Later, he announced a solo album, *Secret Path*, about a terrible era in Canada. It is part of a project that includes a graphic novel and an animated film. Together, they outline the tragic story of Chanie Wenjack, a 12-year-old boy who died 50 years ago after running away from a residential school. Profits will go to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) in Manitoba.

WAKE UP, CANADA!

"Gord is... leading by example," said Ry Moran, head of the NCTR. "He's saying, 'Wake up! We've got work to do, Canada!' That's really, really significant."

If Canadians love and respect the humble Mr. Downie, the feeling is mutual.

"Thank you everybody," he said as The Hip closed its final energetic three-hour set after three encores. "Thanks for listening to that. Thanks for listening, period." ★

THE TERRIBLE LEGACY OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

In the 19th century, the Canadian government made a tragic misstep. It wrongly assumed that it would be best for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to learn English, accept Christianity and embrace Canadian customs. The idea was that after a few generations, native traditions would disappear. Aboriginal communities would then join so-called mainstream Canadian society.

To advance this policy, the government funded church-run residential boarding schools to teach aboriginal children Canadian ways. In all, about 30 percent of aboriginal children – 150,000 – were torn from their families. They were forced to live at 130 of these schools between the 1870s and 1996.

Many of the children who attended residential schools were abused and severely mistreated by their teachers and caregivers. All were lonely and longed to be with their families. Some, like Chanie Wenjack, tried to escape and return home.

As many as 6000 children died while in the residential school system. Survivors often came home traumatized. They also felt alienated from their families.

In the late 1990s, former students began suing the federal government and the churches that ran the schools. Their cases led to the 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. It provided compensation to former students and called for the establishment of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).

In 2008, then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized on behalf of the Government of Canada to former residential school students, their families, and communities. That same year, the TRC was launched to learn the truth about what happened in residential schools and to inform all Canadians about their findings.

The TRC travelled the country for six years, listening to nearly 7000 witnesses. Its final report was delivered in December 2015. The report included 94 recommendations for changes in policies, programs and the "way we talk to, and about, each other" to repair the relationship between aboriginal people and the rest of Canada.

At the end of the TRC mandate, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation was created. It is a permanent home for all the materials gathered by the TRC so that all of Canada can learn from the hard lessons of this black mark in Canadian history.

DEFINITIONS

LEGACY: something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past



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ON THE LINES

Answer the following in complete sentences:

1. How many albums have The Tragically Hip recorded?

2. Name the lead singer of this band.

3. What did the Hip announce last May?

4. Describe the last concert that this band played.

5. Explain why the federal government set up residential schools for aboriginal children in the late 1800s.

6. How did residential schools operate?

7. How many children were forced to attend these schools? How were many of these children treated?

8. Who was Chanie Wenjack and what did he do?

9. How does Mr. Downie plan to remember Chanie and others who suffered in residential schools?

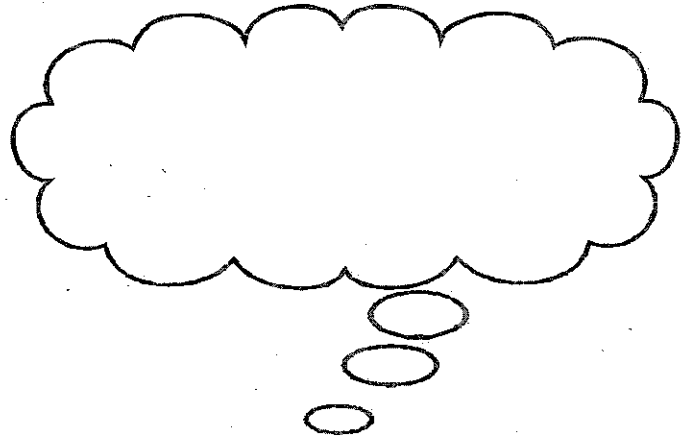
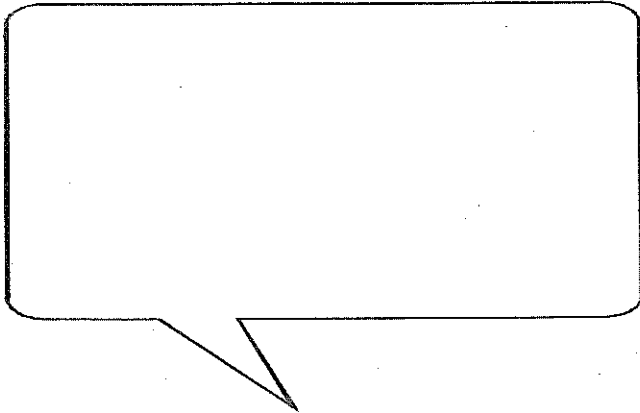


IMAGES IN THE NEWS

FAREWELL, TRAGICALLY HIP

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Write the inner and outer dialogue for the person in this scene. Show what the person is thinking/feeling (inner voice) and saying (outer voice). *A believable conversation conveys appropriate ideas, thoughts, feelings or reactions; is on topic; extends the details of the scene; and is convincing.*



Gord Downie of The Tragically Hip performing at the Air Canada Centre in Toronto as part of the band's Man Machine Poem tour. Marcus Oleniuk/Toronto Star via Getty Images